



Archival Connections

Newsletter of the Catholic Archivist Group

Volume 2, Number 2

Spring 2005

From the Chair – Gayle Desarmia, sp

It is a joy to greet you as this new month begins. The warm spring weather and the many signs of new life keep us in touch with the Easter season and the promise of the resurrection. This is now the third issue of our newsletter. I wish to thank those who have submitted stories. Our newsletter will only be as good as the stories that you submit. Please consider sending a story from your area, from your archives.



I have three identical panoramic black and white photographs (8" x 33") in good condition that I would like to give to anyone interested. Most religious congregations are represented in the photograph in their traditional habits. The photographer was Laurent Marsan. The inscription on the front of the photograph is self-explanatory. "*Au 1^{er} Congrès religieux Canadian tenu du 26 au 30 juillet 1954 à Ville St-Laurent, P. Qué. Groupes des religieuses congressistes devant l'église paroissiale. Session dans les salles du couvent des Soeurs de Sainte-Croix et des Sept-Douleurs*". If you would like one of these photographs for your collection, please contact me.

In addition to the newsletter, please find copies of our Constitutions, our 2005 Membership Directory and a Nomination Ballot in this mailing. Please feel free to share our newsletter with others.

Canadian Catholic Historical Association

Congratulations to Margaret Sanche, Historian and Archivist at St. Thomas More College of Saskatoon, who has been awarded the George Edward Clerk award for her outstanding contributions to the study and advancement of the history of Roman Catholicism in Canada, and her dedicated service in various offices, including Secretary, Vice President, President and President General, on the executive of the Canadian Catholic Historical Association.

The Clerk Award is awarded biennially by the Canadian Catholic Historical Association in recognition of an individual's exemplary contributions to teaching, research, or the preservation of records to enable further study relating to the history of Roman Catholicism in Canada.

Coming up this spring is the Canadian Catholic Historical Conference. It is being held May 31 – June 1 at the University of Western Ontario in London. Perhaps some Catholic Archivist Group members will be attending this worthwhile conference.

Descriptive Inventories and the Human Chain Factor – Natalie Treboute

As a recent graduate from the Faculty of Information Studies, specializing in archival science at the University of Toronto, I have had the fortunate opportunities to work in a variety of archival repositories within Ontario. For each of my positions as an Assistant Archivist, including that at an academic, charity, medical, and congregational (Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul) Archives, I have undertaken the responsibility to work on several descriptive inventories.

Through my work with the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, what was most surprising to me was my ability to complete 60+ descriptive inventories (of large and small fonds) within the span of 6 months. This begs the following question: how was I able to complete so much in little time (congregational archives) and so little with more time (academic, medical, and charity archives)?



In reflecting upon this issue, the one element that made a difference in time and proficiency for the descriptive inventories was the “human chain factor”. Despite the use of advanced software, hardware, and electronic devices in each of these archival repositories, the human chain factor (meaning several other workers who were involved in the process of the records’ arrangement), enabled for a number of prompt, precise, and accurate descriptive inventories at the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul Archives.

In other words, this was the only Archives for which I have worked in which the records that were handed to me for the descriptive inventory aspect had already been arranged in a thorough and competent manner by workers who not only had been working within the congregation for a long period of time, but also had an in-depth knowledge of the functions within the organizations. Furthermore, those who were involved with the arrangement aspect of the records had been, for several years, dedicated to the maintenance of the history of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, as well as highly involved and aware of the activities within the organization itself.

These attributes, as observed, manifested themselves in the arrangement of the records, which, in the end, led to a speedy, solid, and complete description of multiple fonds. Thus, the key to a rapid and sound description is to ensure a solid and complete arrangement that has been processed by a team of workers who are knowledgeable about the organization and can be henceforth contextualized appropriately for the description aspect.

Contrary to my experience at the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, at all of the other archival repositories, I was handed the records in their original format, including the boxes, bags, folders, and binders in which they had been initially placed and stored during the course of the organizations’ daily business. Possessing limited or no in-depth knowledge of the history of several of the organizations, the arrangement

aspect proved to be more challenging and a learning curb was being developed to contextualize the records, which all in all slowed the process to complete the final description.

Of course, this experience is not to negate the importance of rendering the Assistant Archivist with the tasks of arrangement and description in order to help him or her to become a master of the history of the organization, as well as to become familiar with the activities of the institution in question.

However, for a faster completion of a number of descriptive inventories, an ideal working environment that is conducive to achieve this ultimate goal consists of a team of knowledgeable staff who work together on the arrangement aspect, which I call, in sum, the human chain factor.



Key to a good description is a solid arrangement.

Association of Canadian Archivists – Marc Lerman, President

I have particular interest in the activities of the Catholic Archivist Group and I congratulate the Catholic Archivist Group leadership team for the excellent work to establish a relevant archival professional association.

I submit this article as President of the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) and wish to mention ACA's Religious Archives Special Interest Group (RASIS). RASIS exists to provide a forum for all religious archivists and I invite the Catholic Archivist Group membership to become participants in RASIS activities. At ACA Conference 2005 (details below) a RASIS meeting will be held to discuss issues of interest to religious archivists. Please feel free to contact me should you wish to submit an agenda item for this meeting.

The ACA leadership team is in the process of conducting a review of ACA structure and operations to determine the effectiveness of current programs and to identify future priorities. All aspects of the Association's goals, structure, policies, roles, procedures and practices will be reviewed. A survey process will invite members and non-members to reflect on our association's past, present, and future, and to contribute to building a better ACA to serve you. Sister associations like the Catholic Archivist Group are welcome to contribute to the process. The goal is to identify the needs of the archival community, which can be served on an efficient and economic manner by the ACA. Please participate. The future delivery of services depends on your input. In a spirit of collaboration and collegial positive critical analysis we can build a support system worthy of the Canadian archival community for years to come.

I extend to you a hearty invitation to participate in ACA's 30th Anniversary Conference, held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Saskatoon is an attractive site for a Conference and I am sure those attending will have fond memories of this event.

ACA is celebrating 30 years of a mission to serve a vibrant professional membership. Over the years we as a community at times succeeding, at time struggling, have always rallied to find solutions, establish worthy programs, and debate our common issues in a spirit of constructive analysis. The Conference invites us to express our spirit of collaboration and provides a platform to continue the work of building better archives programs.

“Theory and Practice” is the Conference theme and it is most appropriate at this time in our evolution. All of us, from the lone ranger in a small archives to the professional practicing our trade for a large government institution have grappled throughout our careers with issues related to theory and practice. The speed with which the electronic medium is progressing necessitates discussion on theory and its application. ACA’s Program Committee have put together an excellent program which will engender dialogue on the matter and give us tools to use while executing our work. The roster of sessions and speakers is impressive. An excellent program for ACA’s Institute will be delivered. “Leadership for the Archival Profession” is a most appropriate theme and an education subject required by many. Details are available on our website, www.archivists.ca (Conference dates are June 8-11, 2005)

If I do not see you in Saskatoon, may this message engender discussion between Catholic Archives Group members and ACA. Let us unite in a collegial spirit to build a bright future for our profession. Your contribution to our common cause is most relevant and I invite you to contact me anytime.

Telling Our Stories – Catholic Archivist Group 2005 Annual Conference

The 2005 Conference Planning Committee is busy finalizing the details for our annual conference which will take place in Niagara Falls September 19-22. Conference flyers will be coming to you in a separate mailing. In the meantime, here is a look at the schedule.



Monday, September 19

Afternoon – Arrival and registration
Dinner
Evening – “Meet and Greet” Session

Tuesday, September 20

Morning – Welcome
- Michael Power, historian
from the London Diocese
- Liturgy
Lunch
Afternoon – “News from the Stacks”
- Annual General Meeting
Dinner – Michael Higgins, Guest
Speaker

Wednesday, September 21

Morning – “Writing a Dictionary of
Religious biographies”
Lunch
Afternoon – Special Outing (site to be
determined)
Dinner

Thursday, September 22

Morning – Artifacts: “To keep or not to
keep”
Lunch
Departure

Members of the 2005 Conference Planning Committee are:
M.C. Havy, Chair/Contact
Tanya Zadow
Eloi De Grace
Mary Perpetua Kennedy, PBVM
Gayle Desarmia, SP, Ex-officio

Elections

The time has come to nominate persons for the position of Treasurer. This will be a three year term of office which will begin after our annual conference in September. Please consult the Constitutions for a description of the role of Treasurer. The 2005 Membership Directory will give you the list of the names of the persons eligible for the position.



Please note that Jim Mason, CSsR, is not letting his name stand for this position.

Member Highlights



Congratulations to Sister Mary Andrea Mazur and Eloi de Grace!

They each submitted Sister Laurette Couture's name as a prospective member. Since she did become a member, Sister Mary Andrea and Eloi will share the prize money.

We welcome these new members to the Catholic Archivist Group:

Bertille Beaulieu, RHSJ – Religieuses Hospitallieres de St. Joseph, St. Basile NB
Laurette Couture, CSSF – Diocese of St. Paul Alberta Archives
Florence D'Costa – Diocese of Prince George Archives
Deb Majer – Diocese of London Archives

For those who have not yet renewed their memberships for this year, please contact Linda Wicks, our Secretary, as soon as possible.

Publication Schedule

The newsletter will be published December 1 (Fall issue), February 1 (Winter issue) and May 1 (Spring issue).

Submit your news items, articles and photographs by November 15, January 15 and April 15.

The next deadline is November 15, 2005.

Catholic Archivist Group Executive – Contact Information

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